

Editorial, *Daily Globe*

"Earmarks" may not be a four-letter word, but it is an eight-letter one - and to a majority of Republicans, it's definitely dirty.

With U.S. House Republicans voting last week to extend a ban on earmarks for two years, plenty of worthy projects now face an uncertain fate. One is the \$542 million Lewis and Clark Regional Water System, which was authorized by Congress a decade ago yet now may be paralyzed by that entity.

The Minneapolis Star Tribune reported Friday that "at least \$100 million in Minnesota projects hang in the balance for this fiscal year," with the biggest being Lewis and Clark as well as the Central Corridor light-rail line in Minneapolis and St. Paul. Lewis and Clark Executive Director Troy Larson told the newspaper that ceasing funding on the unfinished project would create "a water system to nowhere." That, of course, was a reference to the infamous Alaska "Bridge to Nowhere" project that has often been cited as the ultimate in earmark projects.

Have those advocating for the elimination of earmarks forgotten why they go to Washington in the first place? Last we checked, we elected folks to national office to serve our overall interests - including bringing a piece of the federal pie back home.

A Minnesota Republican, John Kline, told the Star Tribune that he objects to the system by which federal money is allocated. Yet Democrat Betty McCollum, also from Minnesota, pointed out in the same report that earmarks represent less than 1 percent of the federal budget and go toward specific projects that affect local communities.

What's our take? There's no doubt that the future of economic development in this region relies on an adequate water supply, which the Lewis and Clark project helps ensure. The politics of GOP folks like Kline, Michele Bachmann and other same-party Minnesotans effectively amounts to a turning of multiple backs on intra-state neighbors.